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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

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The Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman,

The case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy -- also known BSE or Mad Cow disease -- discovered in Washington last week requires decisive and immediate action on the part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

I recommend that the following steps be taken immediately.

- First, I believe you should suspend actions that you have underway to open the Canadian border to live imports of cattle. The cow that has been diagnosed in the U.S. appears to have originated in Alberta, Canada. I believe that is all the evidence that we need to suspend actions that were underway to reopen this border. The symptoms of this disease can take years to manifest themselves, and we need more information about Canada's effort to prevent BSE.
- Second, I believe you should convene a summit meeting of beef producers and consumers at the earliest possible time in January to develop a strategy to ensure we protect our beef industry and our consumers. I believe our beef supply is absolutely safe but we must give American consumers credible and reliable assurances that it is safe and wholesome.
- Third, I believe that USDA should support the amendment passed by the U.S. Senate this fall that would have prevented "downed animals" from going into the food supply for human consumption.
- Fourth, I strongly urge the Administration to stop opposing Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) regulations for meat. This requirement is now the law of the land and I urge you to work to implement this labeling. I believe that this case of BSE demonstrates that COOL will be helpful to American ranchers and protective of American consumers.

Madame Secretary, this situation requires effective and decisive leadership. I urge you to consider these steps that I have proposed. I look forward to working with you to meet this challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Byron", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Byron L. Dorgan
United States Senator